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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: AUGUST 07, 2009

Summary: Prime Minister Gilani's statement pledging to "review blasphemy laws" that were "detrimental to religious harmony" dominated headlines in all major newspapers on Friday. Reports and photographs of the assassination of a provincial minister in Karachi received front-page coverage. Several major newspapers quoted Interior Minister Malik's claim that "there is strong likelihood that Taliban chief Baitullah Mehsud was killed along with his wife and bodyguards in a missile attack." The Foreign Office spokesman's remarks that the "fresh Indian dossier is inadequate to prosecute the alleged mastermind and facilitators of the Mumbai attacks" were also highlighted. Newspapers highlighted the report that the U.S. is "assisting Pakistan with a \$2.1 million program to establish national standards for the accreditation of teacher education."

Most major newspapers ran editorials on the recent remarks by Prime Minister Gilani hinting at Musharraf's trial on high treason charges. The center-right national English daily "The Nation," observed that the "precondition spelled out by Prime Minister Gilani to try Gen. (Retd) Musharraf indicates the government's unwillingness to take the logical step required after the Supreme Court verdict of July 31." However, the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" advocated that "there is a need too to look to the future rather than peer continuously back into the past." The Karachi-based right-wing pro-Jamaat-e-Islami Urdu daily "Jasarat" noted that the "government led by Prime Minister Gilani does not seem to be serious because the Musharraf-Benazir agreement is still being implemented, as the guarantors of the agreement are firmly present." End Summary.

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News Stories  
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"Centre Matches Rupees 100m Aid For Gojra Victims By Punjab: Gilani Hints At Review Of 'Blasphemy Laws'" "Daily Times" (08/07)

"Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani hinted at a review of the blasphemy law on Thursday, and said a committee will discuss 'laws detrimental to religious harmony' and work on improving them. Gilani announced Rs 100 million as compensation - matching a similar grant by the provincial government - for the victims of the Gojra riots, and vowed to bring those responsible to justice."

"Balochistan Minister Shot Dead In Karachi" "Dawn" (08/07)

"Sardar Rustam Khan Jamali, Balochistan's Minister for Excise and Taxation, was gunned down in Karachi on Thursday. City police chief Wasim Ahmed told 'Dawn' that the attack on Mr. Jamali appeared to be

a carjacking attempt. 'It's not a case of target killing,' he added."

"Mehsud Is Likely Killed In Drone Hit: Says Malik" "The News" (08/07)

"There is a strong likelihood that Taliban chief Baitullah Mehsud was killed along with his wife and bodyguards in a missile attack, Interior Minister Rehman Malik said on Thursday."

"Pakistan Says Fresh Indian Dossier Inadequate" "Dawn" (08/07)

"Pakistan has said that the fresh dossier provided by India is inadequate to prosecute the alleged mastermind and facilitators of the Mumbai attacks being tried by an anti-terrorism court in Rawalpindi, a senior official told 'Dawn.'"

"Interpol Asked To Help Track Suspects" "Dawn" (08/07)

"Pakistan has asked Interpol to issue a global alert for 13 suspects wanted for the attacks in Mumbai of November 2008, the international police agency said on Thursday. 'The authorities in Pakistan are to be commended for making full use of Interpol's global network and tools,' said Secretary General Ron Noble in the statement issued from the Agency's Headquarters in Lyon, France." "Dawn" (08/07)

"You Wanna Talk, Talk; Otherwise We aren't Dying Either" "The News" (08/07)

"Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Thursday again made it clear that Pakistan wanted to hold talks with India on equal terms, with honor and dignity stressing that, 'We are not begging India to come on the negotiation table.' He expressed these views while responding to a number of questions asked by the members of the Parliamentary Committee on National Security during its meeting on Thursday."

"Pakistan Hopes For Composite Dialogue Resumption" "The News" (08/07)

"Pakistan on Thursday expressed confidence that the forthcoming meetings between Foreign Secretaries and Foreign Ministers of India and Pakistan would lead towards progress on resumption of composite Dialogue process, Foreign Office spokesman Abdul Basit said in weekly news briefing on Thursday."

"U.S. Assists Pakistan With \$2.1 Million Program To Help GoP Establish National Standards For Teacher Education Program" "Dawn," "The Nation," "Pakistan Observer," "Islam," "Aaj Kal," "Khabrain" (08/07)

"The United States is assisting Pakistan with a \$2.1 million program that has helped the Government of Pakistan to establish national standards for the accreditation of teacher education. The Government of Pakistan launched these standards on Thursday, with support from the U.S. government through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)."

"Extremists Exploiting Economic Woes Of People: White House" "Dawn" (08/07)

"The United States was providing direct economic assistance to Pakistan to prevent extremists from exploiting people's deprivations, the White House said on Thursday. John Brennan, a senior presidential Adviser on Counter-Terrorism, said that providing such assistance to Pakistan was part of America's new approach to combating extremists."

"U.S. Sets Up Pak-Afghan Cell For War Efforts In Region" "Dawn" (08/07)

"The Pentagon has established a Pakistan-Afghanistan Coordination Cell, in its basement to streamline its war efforts in that region. Headed by Brig-Gen Scott Miller, the cell includes military and civilians personnel with expertise on regional politics, economy and insurgency. The intention is to raise experts who will eventually rotate back and forth between the U.S. and the region."

"U.S. Delegation Expresses Concern; Energy Crisis, Cash Flow To IPPs" "The Nation," "Pakistan Observer" (08/07)

"The 2-member delegation from the United States of America led by Bob Deutsch, Senior Economist, U.S. State Department on Thursday expressed concern over the energy crisis and cash flow to the IPPs. 'We are looking how the U.S. government can help overcome the energy crisis possibly by inviting energy sector companies to move forward,' the delegates stated."

"Clinton Foundation To Build Solar Power Station Near Pak Border" "Daily Times" (08/07)

"The Clinton Foundation will create a solar park to generate more than 5,000 megawatts of electricity close to India's border with Pakistan, The Daily Telegraph reported on Thursday."

"9 Militants Killed In Bajaur" "The News" (08/07)

"At least nine militants were killed and two others sustained injuries during the security forces' action in different areas of Nawagai and Salarzai subdivisions in Bajaur Agency on Thursday, official sources said."

"One Killed, 7 Hurt As Choppers Shell NWA Village" "The News" (08/07)

"A man was killed and seven others, including four women and three children, were injured in shelling and bombing by gunship helicopters of the Pakistan Army on Qutabkhel village near Miramshah in North Waziristan on Thursday morning."

"Soldier, Lashkar-e-Islami (LI) Man Killed In Bara Operation" "The News" (08/07)

"Two people including a soldier were killed during an operation against the Bara-based banned organization, Lashkar-e-Islami (LI), on Thursday."

"Anti-Taliban Militia Raised In Swat To Fight Taliban" "Dawn" (08/07)

"The militancy-hit people of the Kalagai area of Swat have raised a private militia and eliminated three suspected militants.... A group of journalists, who were taken to the area in Kabal tehsil on Thursday by the security forces, attended a Jirga of the militia. Members of the militia told journalists that they had seized six militants and handed them over to security personnel."

"We Have To Keep An Eye On Increasing Number Of Americans In Islamabad: Former Army Generals" "Ummat" (08/07)

"Pakistan's former army generals Gen. (retd) Moin-ud-Din Haider, Gen. (retd) Tirmedi and Gen. (retd) Wajahat Latif in an interview with this newspaper said that Pakistan would have to keep an eye on the increasing number of Americans in Islamabad and that these Americans cannot come without prior approval of Pakistan. They said that Pakistan's sovereignty is at stake."

"Ugly Episode Outside U.S. Embassy Gets Documented" "Dawn" (08/07)

"Concerned authorities are compiling a report on the incident in which a U.S. diplomat passed obscene remarks against a station house officer (SHO) and aimed weapon at him. This was stated by Foreign Office Spokesman Abdul Basit in Islamabad on Thursday, terming the incident as unfortunate. 'Once we receive the report, we will see as to what action should be taken,' he added."

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Editorials/Op-eds  
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"Quest For Unanimity," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (08/07)

"The precondition spelled out by Prime Minister Gilani to try Gen. (Retd) Pervez Musharraf indicates the government's unwillingness to take the logical next step required after the Supreme Court verdict

of July 31.... While the Supreme Court has added a bright chapter in the otherwise less than glorious history of the superior judiciary, it remains to be seen if Parliament is going to live up to the people's expectations."

"Treason Trial," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (08/07)

"Rather unexpectedly, the Prime Minister has stated the government may be willing to put former President Pervez Musharraf on trial, is a deviation from the previous stance by the PPP.... It is true that General Musharraf should by right be made to stand trial for the many wrongs he committed.... Some of the damage at least will not be easy to repair.... But having emerged from this dark period, there is a need too to look to the future rather than peer continuously back into the past.... This is not to say a dictator should not be tried; indeed this should happen to set a precedent for the future."

"Need For Real Opposition," an editorial in the Karachi-based right-wing pro-Jamaat-e-Islami Urdu daily "Jasarat" (cir. 3,000) (08/07)

"The government led by Prime Minister Gilani does not seem to be serious to hold trial of former President Musharraf because the Musharraf-Benazir agreement is still being implemented as the guarantors of the agreement are firmly present. The Zardari government is implementing the American agenda and in a much worse form than the Musharraf administration did."

"Action Under Article 6: Strange Condition Of Parliament's Unanimous Resolution," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (08/07)

"Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani has said that government would not hesitate from taking action against former President Musharraf if the Parliament brings a unanimous resolution in this respect.... Neither Parliament's resolution is required for action under Article 6 of the Constitution nor is there a parliamentary tradition in this respect.... The resolution condition for taking action against Musharraf is difficult to meet; perhaps this is what government wants. PML-N should now present a resolution in the Parliament and expose those parties before the people who do not want to hold a military dictator accountable for his misdeeds."

"Treason Case Against Musharraf?," an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (08/07)

"Politically and legally speaking a treason case against Musharraf seems difficult. The need of the hour is for all political parties, irrespective of their representation in the Parliament, should sit together and come up with a unanimous resolution in this respect."

"Targeted Terror," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (08/07)

"The point perhaps to be made is that the U.S. must realize knocking out Mehsud in this fashion could prove counter-productive. There is every possibility this would trigger a surge of sympathy that may undo gains brought about by the death of a key militant figure. One can understand Washington perhaps feels it has little choice. But the task for Islamabad is to prove that it possess the capability and the commitment to tackle Mehsud and his militias itself. A capture of the man many see as the country's most dangerous terrorist by Pakistani forces, rather than assassination by external agents - particularly U.S. ones - may serve the cause of the wider war on terror more effectively. Militancy in Waziristan may not end with the death of Baitullah Mehsud. A strategy that aims at winning back the agency must be actively pursued by Islamabad."

"Banning Terrorists, Pakistan Style," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (08/07)

"Mr. Malik has promised stern action, etc, against the 25 organizations named in his communication to the National Assembly, but he may find this stern action difficult to implement when the citizens are not even aware of the ban. Indeed, most of them are

considered kosher by the public at large. The complaint the international community has against Pakistan is that it takes no convincing action against the banned organizations and in fact lets them function as normal organizations in its civil society."

"NATO Fans Fire In Balochistan," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (08/07)

"Foreign Office spokesman Abdul Basit told newsmen at Karachi Press Club on Wednesday that arms in Balochistan had been traced back to NATO countries and that Pakistan had already approached those countries in this regard. This is for the first time that a categorical statement has been given on the issue but it is sorry to point out that Pakistan is perhaps the only country in the world where issues of so dangerous and grave nature are handled in a casual manner. One fails to understand what prevents our authorities from raising the issue with due seriousness with their interlocutors from Washington or Brussels. Why we are not ready to even lodge strong protests with the United States and NATO countries? This is high time that the Government accords due priority to the issue and sensitizes the international community about conspiracy being hatched by those considered as friends to destabilize the country."

"Balochistan Factor In Pak-India Talks," an op-ed by Sultan M. Hali in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (08/07)

"India has to stop messing around in Baluchistan,' U.S. media quoted Pakistani officials as saying. The attempt to establish linkages should reinforce those who felt that the mention of Baluchistan was a big blunder which may be exploited by Pakistan to put RAW on the same footing as the ISI, and to claim that India was also guilty of using terror as an instrument to further its strategic objectives. The charge is absurd, if only for the reason that India does not have the capacity to engage in covert operations to harass Pakistan even if it wished so. But the fear is that it may find fertile ground among a constituency in the U.S. desperately looking for ways to inveigle India into the Af-Pak cauldron."

"Choice Before Iran," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (08/07)

"With another four years ahead of him, Mr. Ahmadinejad should be clear about his priorities. His first one should be the domestic scene.... His second priority should be to avoid an attack by Israel. This means Iran must find a solution to its nuclear question in a way that removes western apprehensions about Iran's real aims regarding uranium enrichment. The West must reciprocate every step Iran takes in the right direction."

"Government's Lack Of Interest In Dr. Aafia Siddiqui Release," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (08/07)

"The government should pay immediate attention to the medical treatment of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui. The bias of American judges has been exposed and they cannot be expected to handout justice, especially when the government of Pakistan hasn't provided Aafia with a lawyer.... The government should use all diplomatic options to save her."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)  
Feierstein